FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

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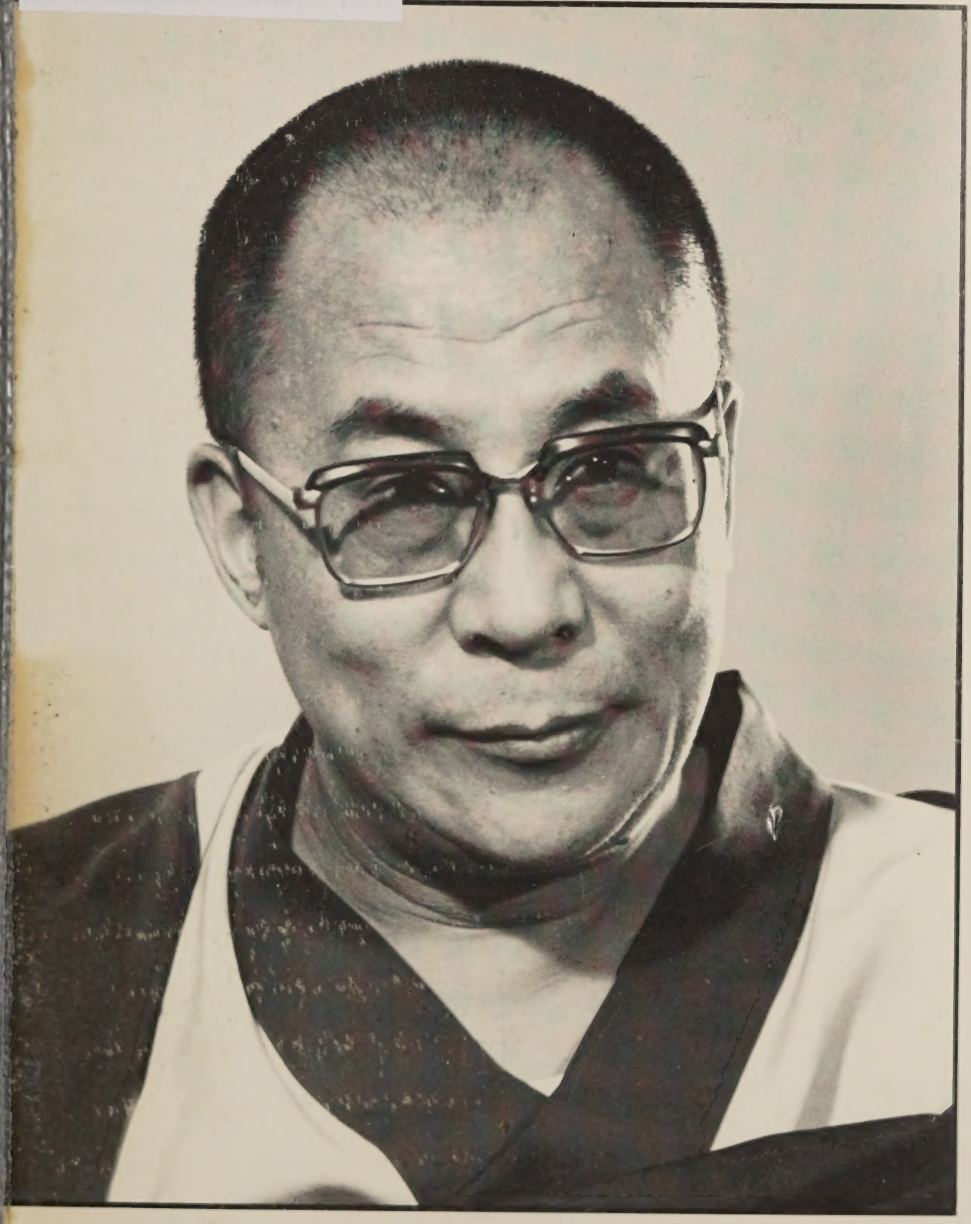

Since 1949 the purpose of Fellowship in Prayer is to promote the practice of prayer among all religious faiths whose fundamental belief is in God regardless of race, creed, or color, and whose tenets include the universal attributes of truth, honesty, justice, and mercy, that thereby there may arise a closer relation to Almighty God and a deeper spirit of fellowship among mankind.

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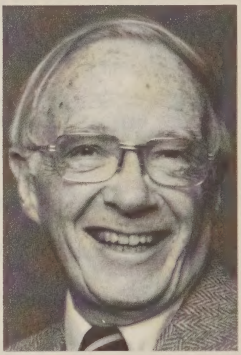


Yesterday I got a call from a reader who told me how much Fellowship in Prayer meant to her and her spiritual life. She said she wished the publication were a person with whom she could sit down and talk about the articles and insights in each issue that were especially important to her.

The way to turn that fantasy into reality, I suggested, was to form a small group of like-minded friends and meet every week or so, in each other's homes, to discuss articles in Fellowship in Prayer that have touched them deeply at a personal level. In such a setting you can share doubts, hopes and faith without fear of judgment or rejection.

In fact, Father Danny Martin, a good friend and FIP Advisor, believes that the future of religion may well lie in such small, non-hierarchical, spiritual communities, where we can experience the reconciliation and re-connection that community brings. Reconciliation with ourselves, with our families and neighbors, and with the natural world in which we are embedded and which we seem intent on destroying. Re-connection with our lost sense of the sacred whole that is in and around us.

Such groups consist, usually, of a dozen or so women and men, of all ages and from a variety of religious and cultural backgrounds. One group I am familiar with is made up of office and construction workers, attorneys and physicians, homemakers and the homeless, the unemployed and the retired.

It met sporadically at the beginning, but grew slowly in numbers and now has a men's group, a group devoted to women's spirituality, a storytelling session, meditation sessions, retreats, organic gardening, and great parties. The members help to support each other and have started projects that include a soup kitchen, a grief support group, and ecological advocacy.

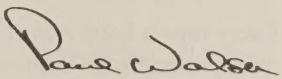
As Danny Martin says,

> In the community setting we can create a situation where we suspend our opinions and judgments in order to listen to each other. When you really listen to somebody else, what they say becomes a part of you—whether

you like it or not. Through this sharing of experience, reflection, and understanding the community nourishes each individual and builds a vital trust.

It's not difficult to start your own small group. Invite like-minded people you know to come together to share prayers, meditation, ritual, discussion, and a time for socializing. Decide how often and for how long you will meet. Start with the current issue of *Fellowship in Prayer*. Choose one or more articles with real meaning for you and ask the group to read and come prepared to comment on them at the next meeting. Where do they identify with the article? Where do they question it? Allow time for people to share their personal, social and ecological concerns as well as their spiritual experiences and practices. Prayers and mystical experiences should lead to prophetic action, as Matthew Fox says, and as trust is built in your group, you may in time be led to some form of action on behalf of "justice, peace and the integrity of creation."

Fellowship in Prayer is in the process of bringing out a new edition of its leaflet on small group meetings for prayer and meditation, and would be happy to send you a copy or copies. Just write to us at 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, New Jersey 08542, or call (609) 924-6863 and ask for Linda.



Paul Walsh

I asked a child walking with a candle, "From whence comes this light?" Instantly she blew it out. "Tell me where it is gone—then will I tell you from whence it is come."

Hasan of Basra

For as long as space endures
And for as long as living beings remain,
Until then may I too abide
To dispel the misery of the world.

Shantideva

God's grace supports the whole of our existence, and can only be conceived of as grace by those who surrender their whole existence and let themselves fall into the unfathomable dizzy depths without seeking for something to hold on to.

Rudolf Bultmann

Looking for God is like seeking a path in a field of snow; if there is no path and you are looking for one, walk across it and there is your path.

Thomas Merton

Every time a baby is born, it brings with it the hope that God is not yet disappointed with humanity.

Tagore

When destiny leads us to the frontier of our being, it makes us personally conscious that we stand before the decision either to fall back upon that which we are already or else to transcend ourselves.

Paul Tillich

This day and that alike you do within your garden spend . . .
Neglectful of the nightingale, the crow your chosen friend.
Yet such companionship must leave its trace upon your soul:
Do you think fire shall cease to burn, or oil and water blend?

Divan of Bedil

The human soul is virtually indestructible, and its ability to rise from the ashes remains as long as the body draws breath.

Alice Miller

All day long I hope in You.

Ps. 25.5

Solving Human Problems by Transforming Human Attitudes

HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA

His Holiness, The Dalai Lama makes a plea for personal love and compassion as the way to world peace. Since we depend on the kindness of others at the beginning and end of our life, he writes, then in the middle we should act kindly toward others.

Of the many problems we face today, some are natural calamities and must be accepted and faced with equanimity. Others, however, are of our own making, created by misunderstanding, and can be corrected. One such type arises from the conflict of ideologies, political or religious, when people fight each other for petty ends, losing sight of the basic humanity that binds us all together as a single human family. We must remember that the different religions, ideologies, and political systems of the world are meant for human beings to achieve happiness. We must not lose sight of this fundamental goal and at no time should we place means above ends; the supremacy of humanity over matter and ideology must always be maintained.

By far the greatest single danger facing humankind—in fact, all living beings on our planet—is the threat of nuclear destruction. I need not elaborate on this danger, but I would like to appeal to all the leaders of the nuclear powers who literally hold the future of the world in their hands, to the scientists and technicians who continue to create these awesome weapons of destruction, and to all the people at large who are in a position to influence their leaders: I appeal to them to exercise their sanity and begin to work at dismantling and destroying all nuclear weapons. We know that in the event of a nuclear war there will be no victors because there will be no survivors! Is it not frightening just to contemplate such inhuman and heartless destruction? And, is it not logical that we should remove the cause for our own destruction when we know the cause and have both the time and the means to do so? Often we cannot overcome our problems because we either do not know the cause or, if

Tenzin Gyatso, the fourteenth Dalai Lama, is the spiritual and temporal leader of the Tibetan people. In the past 20 years he has won a worldwide reputation as a scholar and a man of peace. When he received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989, the Nobel Committee emphasized the non-violent character of his struggle to liberate Tibet from Chinese Communist rule.

we understand it, do not have the means to remove it. This is not the case with nuclear threat.

Whether they belong to more evolved species like humans or to simpler ones such as animals, all beings primarily seek peace, comfort, and security. Life is as dear to the mute animal as it is to any human being; even the simplest insect strives for protection from dangers that threaten its life. Just as each one of us wants to live and does not wish to die, so it is with all other creatures in the universe, though their power to effect this is a different matter.

Broadly speaking there are two types of happiness and suffering, mental and physical, and of the two, I believe that *mental* suffering and happiness are the more acute. Hence, I stress the training of the mind to endure suffering and attain a more lasting state of happiness. However, I also have a more general and concrete idea of happiness: a combination of inner peace, economic development, and, above all, world peace. To achieve such goals I feel it is necessary to develop a sense of *universal responsibility*, a deep concern for all irrespective of creed, color, sex, or nationality.

> We begin from the recognition that all beings cherish happiness and do not want suffering.

The premise behind this idea of universal responsibility is the simple fact that, in general terms, all others' desires are the same as mine. Every being wants happiness and does not want suffering. If we, as intelligent human beings, do not accept this fact, there will be more and more suffering on this planet. If we adopt a self-centered approach to life and constantly try to use others for our own self-interest, we may gain temporary benefits, but in the long run we will not succeed in achieving even personal happiness, and world peace will be completely out of the question.

In their quest for happiness, humans have used different methods, which all too often have been cruel and repellent. Behaving in ways utterly unbecoming to their status as humans, they inflict suffering upon fellow humans and other living beings for their own selfish gains. In the end, such short-sighted actions bring suffering to oneself as well as to others. To be born a human being is a rare event in itself, and it is wise to use this opportunity as effectively and skillfully as possible. We must have the proper perspective, that of the universal life process, so that the

Tom Dunham

happiness or glory of one person or group is not sought at the expense of others.

All this calls for a new approach to global problems. The world is becoming smaller and smaller—and more and more interdependent—as a result of rapid technological advances and international trade as well as increasing trans-national relations. We now depend very much on each other. In ancient times problems were mostly family-size, and they were naturally tackled at the family level, but the situation has changed. Today we are so interdependent, so closely interconnected with each other, that without a sense of universal responsibility, a feeling of universal brotherhood and sisterhood, and an understanding and belief that we really are part of one big *human* family, we cannot hope to overcome the dangers to our very existence—let alone bring about peace and happiness.

One nation's problems can no longer be satisfactorily solved by itself alone; too much depends on the interest, attitude, and cooperation of other nations. A universal humanitarian approach to world problems seems the only sound basis for world peace. What does this mean? We begin from the recognition that all beings cherish happiness and do not

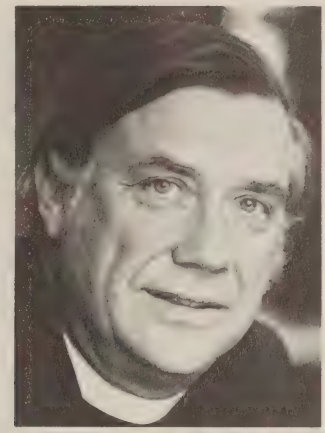
want suffering. It then becomes both morally wrong and pragmatically unwise to pursue only one's own happiness oblivious to the feelings and aspirations of all others who surround us as members of the same human family. The wiser course is to think of others also when pursuing our own happiness. This will lead to what I call 'wise self-interest,' which hopefully will transform itself into 'compromised self-interest,' or better still, 'mutual interest.'

Although the increasing interdependence among nations might be expected to generate more sympathetic cooperation, it is difficult to achieve a spirit of genuine cooperation as long as people remain indifferent to the feelings and happiness of others. When people are motivated mostly by greed and jealousy, it is not possible for them to live in harmony. A spiritual approach may not solve all the political problems that have been caused by the existing self-centered approach, but in the long run it will overcome the very basis of the problems that we face today.

On the other hand, if humankind continues to approach its problems considering only temporary expediency, future generations will have to face tremendous difficulties. The global population is increasing, and our resources are being rapidly depleted. Look at the trees, for example. No one knows exactly what adverse effects massive deforestation will have on the climate, the soil, and global ecology as a whole. We are facing problems because people are concentrating only on their short-term, selfish interests, not thinking of the entire human family. They are not thinking of the earth and the long-term effects on universal life as a whole. If we of the present generation do not think about these now, future generations may not be able to cope with them.

The Interfaith Dialogue

JAMES PARKS MORTON



Seeing God anew in all creation, we are also hearing with new ears all peoples' songs of religious devotion and praise. The diverse tongues of Jerusalem we now recognize as the faith traditions of the planet.

Religious conflict still burdens the world. Belfast and Beirut break our hearts. But, thank God, the ecumenical and interfaith movements, in the long run, are growing with even greater power. What is interesting is that these developments feel both compelling and inevitable. To many of us participation in the interfaith dialogue has become a true calling, moving us like the "rushing, mighty wind" that augurs Pentecost. Why this vocation now?

If we are talking today as one planet, it is both natural and necessary to seek the most inspired language. The rhetoric of nationalism and ideology no longer suffices. Deeply religious language—the finest, richest dialects of faith—is needed to uplift the planetary conversation. The cause of world peace also makes interfaith dialogue critical. In our time, we have seen religious leaders of the world—Archbishop Tutu, the Dalai Lama, Mother Teresa, Rabbi Heschel, Dorothy Day, Sheik Mussafer, Phillip Deere—become a vanguard for peace and reconciliation.

Dean of The Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine in New York City and Canon of St. George's Cathedral in Jerusalem, James Parks Morton is also President of The Temple of Understanding in New York City. In 1975 Time *magazine named him one of "100 Young U.S. Leaders" and "50 Young World Leaders." Dr. Morton serves on many boards, publishes in the field of art, and is an Advisor to Fellowship in Prayer.*

Spiritual hunger also fans this flame. The harmonies of the interreligious chorus are helping many find new homes or return to old ones. Meanwhile, seeds of ancient traditions are blown to new soil. Christianity flourishes in Africa, the Buddha Dharma has deep roots in the West. Inter-religious dialogue is partly irresistible, then simply because so many faith tongues are increasingly being spoken on the same turf. It is a little like Manhattan's Upper West Side—our own prophetic neighborhood.

Some feel concern about the interfaith movement. Is everything becoming an amalgam? What of the radical specificity of one's own faith tradition? Concern is legitimate, but let us be mindful of Pentecost's unique message. For of the voices of Pentecost we are told, "The Spirit gave them utterance." Truly, in this great conversation, it is the divine Spirit, not the human utterance, which we hear cutting across barriers and joining us without diminishing our particularity or diversity. When we feel the mystic warmth of the Muslim zikr, the serenity of Buddhist meditation, or the humanity of the Passover seder, it is indeed God's own glory that becomes most vivid.

Soul Sabbatical

MEREDITH GOULD

An aspiring yogini immerses herself in monastery life—with surprising results.

Sixteen months ago I moved over two hundred miles from family and friends to live within walking distance of the Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health in Lenox, Massachusetts. Kripalu, in addition to being a well-known educational and spiritual retreat attracting nearly 15,000 annual guests, is a yoga ashram with a residential community of three hundred members. Another two hundred or so people who consider themselves Kripalu-connected live in the surrounding area. I had visited Kripalu for years, first taking yoga programs, then serving regularly as a volunteer, and I loved everything about the place. Even the long, dark Berkshire winters seemed more meditative than gloomy in the context of ashram life. In any season, the panoramic view of the lake and surrounding mountains from the front door of the former Jesuit novitiate provide daily evidence of God's glorious, all-embracing presence.

What, I began to wonder, would it actually be like to live near and serve at what is essentially a monastery? What would it be like to take a sabbatical for my soul? What would I learn? How would my spiritual life be transformed? How would that transformation show up in my daily life? Big questions. I was on the cusp of forty and ready to discover the answers.

Before moving, I spent nearly nine months preparing for the known by overhauling my spending habits, seeking out supportive friends, and giving away things I just didn't need anymore. I prepared for the unknown through daily yoga and prayer. By the time the movers arrived, I was prepared to live more simply. I was prepared to become more flexible in body, mind, and spirit. I was prepared to experience all my feelings without judgment or attachment. I was, in sum, prepared to enter into a more complete yogic lifestyle than ever before—to cultivate Witness consciousness, to surrender to God, and learn all this through service to others. I was not prepared to have my carefully constructed and fervidly maintained sadhana (spiritual practice) disintegrate almost completely

Meredith Gould is a regular contributor to FiP.

within two months of moving. As I look back over a year rich with experience and meaning, I suspect this particular phenomenon may be an essential (and cyclical) phase of a developing spiritual life.

What happened?

It was, paradoxically, both the velocity and meditative absorption of ashram life that threw me initially. I had totally immersed myself in a community committed to personal and spiritual growth; a community deeply committed to developing consciousness. In practice, this meant acknowledging the lessons of spirit available in every action and interaction, every moment of the day. I was learning to see God in everyone, everywhere, at all times, and in all things.

I soon found myself feeling too exhausted and exhilarated by community to actually do much more than *seva* (selfless service) which was revelatory enough. Formal postures (hatha yoga), chanting (mantra yoga), and meditation (raja yoga) become a distant memory. I stopped reading scriptures and completely abandoned what had before my move been a fairly rich and satisfying prayer life.

In self-defense I cultivated a belief in spiritual osmosis, as if being in the building, working alongside full-time ashram residents would be enough. I substituted conversation for contemplation. Proximity would

> Contemplation and yoga create the stillness I need to hear God. Chanting and prayer create a way for me to speak to God. Scriptures create a context for my search for meaning.

take care of all my spiritual needs, I figured. Every meeting at Kripalu, no matter how casual, begins and ends with prayer. Every day begins with *pranayama* (yogic breathing) and meditation, and ends with services for the entire community. There's hatha yoga, Kripalu-style, every afternoon.

In this environment, my individual practices seemed redundant, so I simply stopped doing them. Shortly thereafter I became a total spiritual scofflaw and stopped attending community *sadhana* entirely. Walking through sacred space would minister to my soul without my having to do anything more than notice where I was and what I was doing. For quite a while I thought this was working just fine, especially since I was getting positive feedback about my growing capacity for patience, compassion, and service—but it wasn't. Just when it seemed my spiritual life

Janet Gnall

was being transformed right out of existence, I returned to my individual devotions.

What happened?

Quite simply, I noticed something important was missing and in noticing that, realized more fully what it means to have, and what is required to sustain a personal relationship with God: personal observances. Contemplation and yoga create the stillness I need to hear God. Chanting and prayer create a way for me to speak to God. Scriptures create a context for my search for meaning. All these forms of worship keep me in relationship to myself and to spirit, which in turn clarifies and enriches the other relationships in my life. While there is tremendous power in spiritual community with its shared ritual, prayer, and intentional living, there is something truly unique about individual practice. One, I learned, is no substitute for the other.

Without a doubt I will drift again, but now I'm ready for that eventuality, I learned, this time, that my spiritual growth continues whether I'm awake to it or not, and retreat makes coming home all the more precious.

MOVING?—Please let us know of any change in your address as soon as possible. Each returned copy of *Fellowship in Prayer* costs us 39 cents in addition to the original mailing charges. *HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN WHEN YOUR SUBSCRIPTION EXPIRES?* Look at the date on your mailing label. We won't automatically drop subscribers who don't renew when their subscription expires, but if your journal is returned to us by the Post Office, your name is dropped from our mailing list.

The Unexpected Lesson

SHIRLEY ANNE BRIGGS

When she made a cherished dream come true, this writer learned that happiness is a decision.

For many years I wanted to visit Crater Lake in Oregon. The desire began when I was a very young girl and I "just happened" to look in a travel book and first saw this beautiful place. I don't remember any of the other attractions which were featured in the book, but Crater Lake never left my mind. I felt drawn to this area and promised myself that someday I would see for myself what it was like. While I was visiting in Oregon I mentioned to my friends that I would like to see Crater Lake. It was placed on the "things to see and do" list, and one sparkling bright Saturday morning we started out on a five-hour drive to fulfill my dream.

The Crater Lake area had the freshest air and cleanest look I had ever seen. It felt very familiar to me, as though I had been there before and was not seeing it for the first time. As the car stopped at a lookout area I glanced out the window and caught my first glimpse of the lake. The deep clear blue of the water literally took my breath away: this was the most beautiful sight I had ever seen. The visit lasted a few hours and I could have stayed forever. I return in meditation to this "pool of peace" whenever my life gets a bit tense and the experience will always be with me, even if I never again visit Crater Lake in person.

It is very lovely when a dream comes true, isn't it? Have you ever thrilled to the experience of seeing a cherished dream come true? But it is also extremely important to enjoy the scenery on the way—the process. One of the most frequent causes of unhappiness and lack of joy is our attempt to live life on the deferred payment plan.

Many persons have stated to me that they will be happy when they graduate from school, when they get married, when they finish paying all their debts, after all the children are safely through college and on their own, when they have completed and accomplished a dream, or seen the successful attainment of any other desired goal. People who think in this manner are setting themselves up for disappointment!

Shirley Anne Briggs resides in Yorkville, IL.

Tom Dunham

Experiencing happiness and joy is a mental exercise and must be learned and practiced in the present moment. Happiness can never be contingent upon solving any external problem or in reaching a future goal. Happiness is a decision; a commitment each of us makes to ourself. When we reach one goal, if we do not have another to immediately take its place, we will more than likely find that the moment of success feels a bit hollow.

Since I was nine years old music has played an important part in my life. The organ has always been my favorite instrument and my study of it lasted for many years. I practiced several hours every day, before and after school, then before and after work. I took this music business very seriously; it became my passionate purpose. A few years ago I found that studying and playing the organ was becoming increasingly a chore; the joy had left this experience for me. I continued for quite some time after first feeling this discomfort, thinking it would pass. It didn't and, in fact, became more intense, until the day when I closed the cover on the organ and put the music away. I waited for several months to see if the desire to play would return. When it did not, the organ was sold and I became a fan instead of a performer.

When my friends discovered what I had done, some of them expressed concern over all the "wasted years" that I had spent in the study of music, only to give it all up. I disagree that I wasted time and energy because the *process* was such a great pleasure. The reaching out and doing my best and seeing steady improvement: that was the joy in playing. When I gave it up, I did not lose anything, because each moment I had spent at the keyboard gave me pleasure and fulfillment. It was living in the present moment that made this experience a success for me, in spite of the way it may have appeared to others.

One of the greatest pleasures in my life comes from writing. It is interesting to note that if I had clung to music, writing would probably not be a part of my life today. It was necessary to release something which no longer fit in my life, before a new creative adventure could find me. Many persons have asked me which of my writings I enjoy the most

It was necessary to release something which no longer fit in my life before a new creative adventure could find me.

and my reply is always the same: it is the one I am creating right at this moment, either in my mind on paper through the magic and wonder of the word processor. There is deep satisfaction in seeing an article published, as this is most every writer's dream. The greatest satisfaction of all is found in the *process*, the actual creating and giving birth to the idea and clothing the words with form and presenting them with a life of their own.

The good news is that the Master Teacher taught: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." (John 10.10). I believe this means more abundant life in this present moment, not at a future time. When the future becomes the present we continue to live *that* "now" in a fully abundant manner. When we discover the awareness of the truth that we are never alone, or separated from God and Good, we feel secure enough to relax and experience the kaleidoscope of events in our life, living each one to the utmost and then gently releasing it and reaching out to joyfully embrace the next.

Tom Dunham

Life is Over Like a Sigh

LUCY M. PRITCHETT

"Come tomorrow for the funeral. It will be a powerful experience." This promise came true for a retreatant at the Abbey of Gethsemani, where the great contemplative monk, Thomas Merton, lived and wrote from 1941 until 1968.

We are not of this world.

That is the thought that fills my mind as I watch the monks slowly and carefully lower the body of Father Raymond into the ground.

I am standing in the small cemetery outside the church of the Abbey of Gethsemani, a monastery in central Kentucky. The monks here take vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. They practice silence; their days filled with work and prayer.

Next to the church and the monastery, there is a guest house. Three weeks out of the month, the guest house is open to male retreatants. The first week of every month is reserved for women. I have spent many weekend retreats at Gethsemani and find it to be a place of comfort, healing and solitude.

But I wasn't there this time on retreat. The previous day, as I was driving back to Louisville from a three day visit in western Kentucky, a small whisper suggested I stop at the Abbey. My mind kept telling me, "Don't be silly. Get home!", but the urging of my heart won.

When I arrived, Brother Luke, the guestmaster, welcomed me with his clear eyes and an energetic hug. After a few words of greeting, Brother Luke told me that one of the monks, Father Raymond, had died that morning. He was 87 years old and had been a part of the community at Gethsemani for over 50 years. "Come tomorrow for the funeral. It will be a powerful experience, " he promised. I had never been invited to a funeral before, and was curious to see what made this one so unique.

So I find myself standing in the private graveyard. A visitor among Father Raymond's relatives, friends and fellow brothers. The monks chant; their voices solemn. The rhythmic sound drowns the song of the birds and the wind.

Lucy Pritchett is a freelance writer who enjoys reading about the spiritual paths of others and writing about her own spiritual adventures. She lives with 2 cats in Louisville, KY.

Janet Gnall

And the church bell sounds. Bong . . . Bong . . . Bong . . .

I am astonished to see there is no coffin. The body is stretched out on a bier. The corpse merely clothed in hooded robe, black leather belt and sandals. A rosary rests in the hands.

The bell continues to toll. The Cantor, standing over the body, reads from Psalm 89:

> Our life is over like a sigh.
> Make us know the shortness of life
> That we may gain wisdom of the heart.

As I reflect on the wonder of these words, six monks take hold of the straps of the white hassock cradling the body. Gently they lift and lower it into the grave lined with evergreens. A seventh monk, standing in the grave, raises his arms and holds the head as he helps with the final resting of Father Raymond.

The monks continue to chant. Repeating words I don't comprehend. The bell . . . Bong . . . Bong . . . My heart vibrates with the sound.

The Abbot, Father Timothy, steps to the edge of the grave. He stoops,

picks up a handful of loose dirt. Silently, he makes the Sign of the Cross, letting the earth fall through his fingers onto the body below.

And the bell . . . Bong . . . Bong . . . Bong . . .

One monk begins shovelling dirt into the grave. The others file by. Some stop to say a quiet prayer, some pass quickly. Tears are on my face. Someone hugs me. Brother Luke touches my shoulder. He hands me a fistful of dirt and leads me to the grave. I hesitate. Then, I let the earth fall into the opening.

I feel a strange mixture of sorrow, joy and hope. Death is simple. The flesh returns to the earth: the spirit, soaring, returns home.

Rock Ritual IV

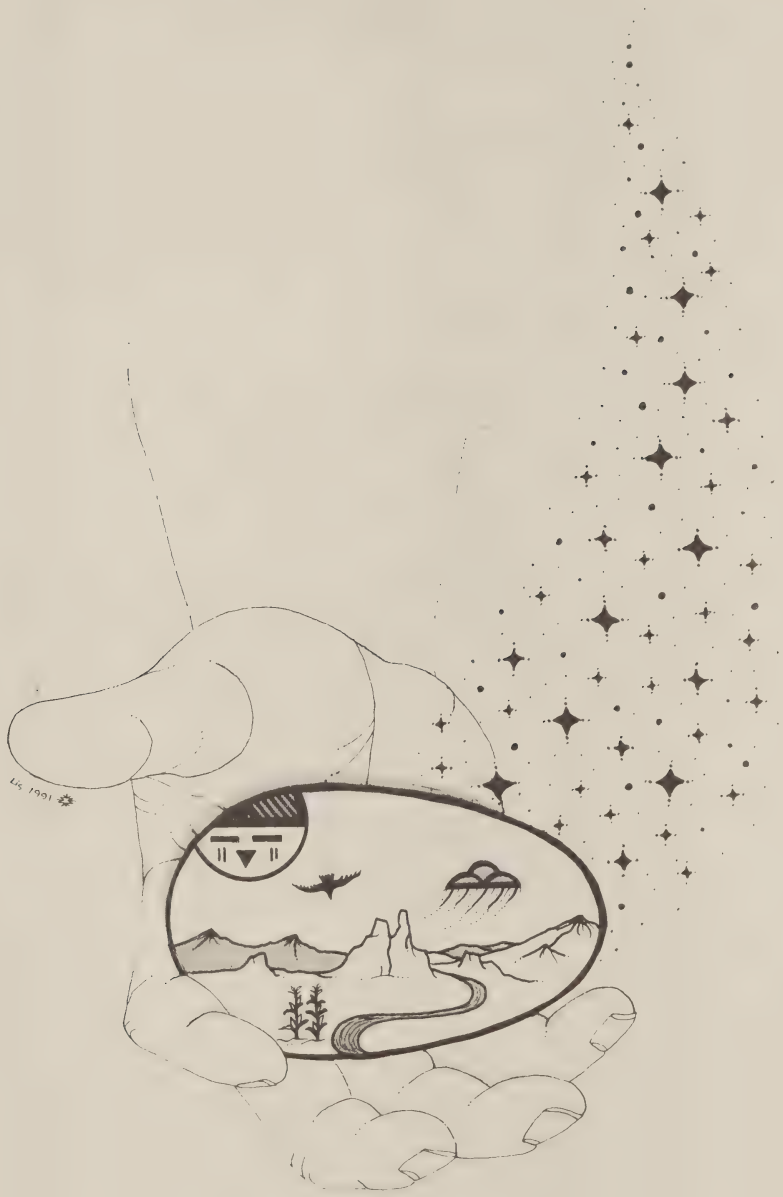
ROBERT O'ROURKE

This sequel to three previous "Rock Rituals" reminds us to stay "close to elemental things," like the rain, the wind, and the sky.

From Sonoran Desert silence
  a rock called my name.
A grandfather rock (Tunkasila)*
  formed at the time of beginning—
  shaped by the Great Spirit—
  Inspirited with wisdom—
Sent to teach me about
  Mother Earth,
  Father Sky,
    and life!
Reminding me
  to remain close to elemental things—
  the feel of seasons dancing on my skin
    the soft rain of Spring,
    warm Summer sun,
    the cleansing cold of Winter.
  to hear earth and sky songs—
    the cry of a hawk,
    music in the wind,
    whisperings of sprouting seeds.
  to know varied fragrances—
    flowering meadows;
    tall pines;
    deep, rich soil.
  to behold inspiring beauty—
    bright, Autumn leaves;
    dark thunder clouds;
    far-reaching horizons.

*Sioux name for "Grandfather."

A writer, poet, and sculptor, Bob O'Rourke makes his home in Fort Collins, Co. Lisa Smith, whose illustration accompanies this article, resides in Colorado Springs, CO.



Like you, grandfather, may I be
sculptured by the travails of Life—
learning to endure suffering,
to be patient,
to hold hope in my heart.
Along the way, may my path be beautiful;
my spirit alive in
reverance for growing things,
the sharing of peace,
the ways of love.
Finally, when it is time to sing
my death song,**
may my released soul travel the
Spirit Path (Milky Way)
ever trusting the Great Mystery,
present at my birth and faithful
unto death.

**The Indian prepared a Death Song for the day when he or she would face death. White Antelope, Cheyenne Chief, shot and killed at the Sand Creek Massacre of 1864 sang, "Nothing lives long, except the earth and the mountains." Then his heart was still.

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780 Sabbath Days

CAROL DUCHESNE BIALOCK

Close to burn-out, this writer discovered that a weekly sabbath day of "prayer and fun" renews creativity and restores one's sense of spaciousness.

It was back in 1977. I had been living in Chile for nine years. The honeymoon of the "missionary" call was over. I was tired, tense and needed a sabbatical, which came in the form of a home visit to the U.S.A. And during those months of respite came the call to take a "sabbath" each week, a twenty-four hour pause that refreshes.

Fourteen years and 780 sabbath days later, I look back on that decision as one of the best of my life.

Somehow, perhaps because it has become an absolute physical and spiritual life-saver for me, I've been faithful. Maybe once or twice a year, at most, I have to take a make-shift rest day: two hours here, four hours there, to make up for the loss. But usually I'm faithful to it, and it's faithful to me.

It has taken different forms and methods—and freedom from methods! Back in Chile in 1978, I lived in Copiapo', a town on the edge of the Atacama desert. On Fridays I would head for the desert, a fifteen minute walk, with a bag lunch. I would climb the bare hills for about an hour, then sit down on the ground to pray, remembering God's presence, letting myself be loved. Then I would walk on, stop when tired, and take out my journal, read over what the week had brought—the events of the days, the dreams of my nights—and reflect on God's action in my life. Usually I would find a cave in the hills, abandoned by miners, and rest and pray there. The cave became a womb in which I was being reborn.

Then, in 1981, I was called to Rome. My sabbath days were journeys from church to church, on foot, praying, reflecting on the past week, the past month, reading, getting perspective on my life, on God's call to me in the present. In between, it was fun to explore Rome's plethora of old churches and discover antiquities at every turn. As usual, my sabbath day combined prayer and fun. And I was growing in self-knowledge. My mid-life crisis was turning into new creativity and mature enthusiasm.

Carol Bialock is a regular contributor to FiP.

Cliff Moore

Then came a year of study (1984) at Seattle University, and in a sense the whole year was one long sabbath day. But still I took time, a leisurely day each week, to pray, to process, to journal, to look objectively at my life.

In 1985 and '86 I was back in Chile. They were painful years of letting go of the past. (I had gone to Chile in 1968, so my roots there were deep.) My sabbath days were difficult; I was ill and depressed. But they helped me, finally, to decide to make the break and return to the United States.

Now, since 1987, I have been in San Jose, California. My repose days have been spent in the ocean, lakes and parks of the Bay Area. The weekly review of my life, of God's ever-more-evident action, keeps me in physical and psychological balance, contributes greatly to my deep peace and joy, and has freed me to enter into the most creative period of my life, finding new ways of serving the homeless, giving spiritual direction and retreats, and writing poetry and articles.

Now: how to make a sabbath day part of one's life?

(1) Recognize Your Need for a Day Off.

Some people need burn-out to open their eyes. Some begin to see they're getting nowhere (apparently) fast, that life at a break-neck pace is not satisfying, that somehow they lack roots or trunk or branches or flowers or fruit.

(2) Let Go of Unnecessary Activities.

You have to be willing to sacrifice other interests. Here, I think is the heart of the matter. If a rest day comes in—and after all, it's the third commandment of Jews and Christians—a lot of other things have to go out. Slowly, I began to realize that that's what discipline and asceticism are all about; not fasting and hair shirts, but getting one's priorities straight and making life-giving choices.

(3) Select the Right Setting.

The setting may be a park, a desert, a lake, a church, a university campus, an art museum, a quiet corner of your own house, or a silent, solitary walk on busy streets. It may take ingenuity or creativity to find your setting, but for all of us the place is there calling to us.

(4) Keep a Journal.

It cannot be emphasized too much that self knowledge and self acceptance are at the beginning, middle and end of the spiritual life. St. Theresa of Avila puts self knowledge in both the first and seventh mansions of her *Interior Castle*. Certainly Zen Buddhists, with their emphasis on awareness, know this. And I firmly believe that it is reflection on experience that is the key to self knowledge. So I would suggest that journaling on the six days preceding your sabbath is the fodder that fattens the seventh day.

Let the journal be your friend and, ultimately, your guru. Put down the facts about your day and your feelings. Try different techniques: "automatic" writing (just anything and everything that bubbles up); or write an "unsent letter" to someone; or put down what you consider

major stepping-stones in your life or month or week; or dialogue (in writing) with a friend, an enemy, even with your own body or your own inner wisdom. I would recommend Kathleen Adams' *Journal to the Self* and Christina Baldwin's *Life's Companion: Journal Writing as a Spiritual Quest*.

At the end of each year I take a look back at those 52 sabbath days. It's hard to choose an adequate image. Was I like Mary, the mother of Jesus, who "kept all these things, pondering them in her heart" (Luke 2.51)? Were my sabbath days 52 bridges, forming one great link with God and the cosmos? Or is the best image a great spaciousness: If I've taken extended time and space for myself, then I'm more aware of the moment, the message, the miracle of the ordinary. Life itself becomes a great spaciousness. For the most part, I have ceased to rush, to judge, to defend, to attack. I am open and vulnerable and free, and in great part I owe this to those 780 sabbath days.

Prayer for New Families

TOM JUREK

Lord, help those beginning a family.

Give them generosity
when faced with a temptation
to put worldly goods over family obligations.

Give them patience
especially when others
abandon them to "go off on their own."

Give them unity
especially when schedules are hectic
and busy days and nights pull them apart.

Give them true friends and understanding relatives
who choose to support rather than criticize.

Above all, give them faith, hope and love;
Faith so that they will know that it is your will that
brings them together
Hope to know that Your generosity will see them through
Love to know that any sacrifice, or inconvenience
is a small price to pay;
for their family is Your family,
and Your family is destined for eternal life with you.

Thank you.

Tom Jurek is Development Director of Catholic Services for children and youth in St. Louis, Mo. This agency is engaged in adoption and foster care work, which repeatedly gives Tom the joy of seeing new families born.

Janet Gnall

Hunger: an American Parable

LOIS McWHORTER

As the teacher was taking the students through the marketplace, they stopped to watch some young children begging for food. Two thin young boys stood before them, holding out empty bowls. One was smiling. One was crying.

"Why do you smile?" asked the teacher of the first boy.

"Because God is good to me," said the child.

"How can you say that when you are hungry?"

"Because the sky is so beautiful and blue today and the sun keeps me warm," replied the child.

"And you," she asked the second boy, "Why do you cry?"

"Because my stomach hurts, I am alone and I am scared. Where is *my* comfort? Has God abandoned me?" cried the child.

The teacher turned to the pupils and asked, "Who is the most spiritual here, and who is the least so?"

A student replied, "The grateful child is the most spiritual, of course. The complaining one is the least so, for not appreciating what God has given him."

"No," said the teacher. "They are both spiritual. Do they both not cry out to God? Are they both not honest, which is pleasing to God? They are both most spiritual."

"The least spiritual is that one of us who has rice and does not fill their bowls."

One of the pupils felt like arguing further. "But we are spiritual! We study God without ceasing. We pray all the time."

"Ah," sighed the teacher, "But do we listen to God? God has just recently spoken."

"What then did God say?" asked the surprised students.

"Why, God said, 'I am hungry.' "

A native Oregonian living in San Jose, CA, Lois McWhorter is a writer and a staff member at a shelter for homeless women. Friends report she is also "a gardener with an emerald thumb."

Prayer to the God of the Whatever

PAULINE SEMKOW

A Roman Catholic nun discovers The-Beyond-in-Our-Midst, a loving presence in "every nook and cranny of life."

If you would like your "transforming experience" to appear in Fellowship in Prayer, *send it to the Editor, Fellowship in Prayer, 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542.*

Like so many people, I desire to pray—to deepen my relationship with God, with others, myself and the world. I too, have struggled with prayer, often wondering, "How do I do it?"—especially when distractions, dryness and so many other difficulties seem to make it impossible to pray.

During one of my directed retreats several years ago, I had one of those days when every attempt to pray ended up in frustration. I could not concentrate because my body ached so, and I felt very restless. I decided to go down to the beach and sit in the sun. Perhaps the warmth would lessen the aches and then I would be able to pray. However, the longer I sat there, the more restless I became, and prayer seemed completely out of the picture, even here.

It was a windy summer day. Gradually I became aware of the tall beach grass nearby, rustling in the wind. It seemed just as restless as I felt. In harmony with the grass' music, was the crowing of the crows, and the lashing of the waves, as they pounded against the shore. Everything was restless with me!

Suddenly, I found myself praying to the God of my restlessness, and for all the people who felt restless throughout the world. I really don't remember what happened then. Time just disappeared. When I "awoke," I found myself praying to the God of my rest. To my surprise, there was no pain or restlessness in me. I felt deep peace and was very energized. With delight, I picked up my beach chair and headed back to my room, where "I could now get to the business of praying." (How unaware I was of what had just been experienced!)

As I settled down to pray, the sound of a lawn mower roared outside

S. Pauline Semkow is a spiritual director at Maryhill Renewal Center in Pineville, LA.

Cliff Moore

my window. Instead of being annoyed, I spontaneously began to pray to the "God of this noise." Instead of distracting me, the roaring motor moved me toward God. Thus began the development of my prayer to the "God of the Whatever." It was only after sharing this experience with others, however, that the richness of this grace began to unfold. A friend remarked that the prayer was like a psalm, for the psalmists always cried out to God from whatever experience they were in.

Over the years, my "God of the Whatever" prayer has enabled me to find God's Presence in every nook and cranny of ordinary life. As John of the Cross once said: "Pray out of the reality in which you are; be yourself; pray in the way that is given to you to pray." I feel the "God of the Whatever" does exactly this. My restlessness that day on the beach so many years ago was a gift that continues to deepen. It has taught me that prayer can grow out of the very experience I'm in at the present moment. All I need to do is:

1) ACKNOWLEDGE my experience of the present moment.
2) CLAIM AND ACCEPT whatever it is as my own.

3) CALL UPON THE GOD of "The Whatever."
4) GIVE this "Whatever" to God as the only gift I have.
5) PRAY out of this experience, and
6) LET GOD . . . TAKE ME . . . THROUGH IT. . . .

Through these steps, God gradually became the God of my entire being. I came to see that everything, every experience of life is a gift out of which I can learn to pray, if I have eyes to see God. I am never alone. God is there in my midst, my "God of the Whatever": gracious, tender, loving, broken, crying, mysterious, surprising, laughing with delight, WAITING FOR ME . . . with Merciful Love.

Ask Angela

BARBARA ACKERMAN

Do you have a question of the heart or spirit that needs attention? Angela, our canine sage-in-residence, would love to help. Please write to her in care of FiP, 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542, and she will give you her answer in our next issue.

Dear Angela,

What do you do when you can't always get what you want?

Sincerely,
Frustrated

Dear Frustrated,

Thank you for bringing up this particular issue. Wanting something and not getting it is a slice of life all of us chew on now and then. My friend Barbara tells me that a rock group called the Rolling Stones once sang an entire song about just this very issue. Concerned citizens everywhere, I'm told, sang along on the chorus. Though frustration may be a part of life, it certainly need not become a way of life.

For me personally, I save a great deal of energy by investing all of me in wanting and none of me in feeling frustrated that I don't have it yet.

However, I am not a stranger to not getting what I want. An example? Macaroni and cheese sauce. I want some. Now. I have to wait for a human to want some. I must wait for a human to make it. I even have to wait for a human to eat all of the macaroni and cheese so that I can eat *just* the sauce. Then I have to wait for the tin to hit the kitchen floor so I can steal it, and lick the sauce up in a corner of another room. There is a great deal of waiting, wishing, and wanting going on here for just a few

licks of sauce. What do I do to pass the time? I pray, pace, putter, pine, pout, whimper, wag, whine, turn, twirl, sniff, snorkle, sneeze, and snooze. Even when I cannot always get what I want immediately, I lead a full and busy life. I try not to get bogged down with the waiting part of wanting. This helps me get through, and I pass it on to all of you. Even while you're wanting, keep moving merrily along to the next thing. For me, this means chicken—always my number-one want. There is nothing I wouldn't do for it, be it fried, broiled, baked, or on the kitchen floor.

Living my life as a full-time chicken wanter, I know that it is best to remain upbeat and hopeful. Also, it is helpful to put myself in a position where I can actually *receive* what it is that I want. A bed in the kitchen has proved to be an excellent spot for chicken patrol. This is a technique that's invaluable: be available to receive what you want. Likewise, it is always good to putter playfully and nonchalantly into the kitchen whenever a human is there. There is definitely an increase in the chicken-possibility factor. Though my family eats vegetables and salad pretty exclusively, it is still important for me to enter the kitchen filled with chicken-want and hope of fulfillment. *Sometimes* chicken does fall! How do I cope when it doesn't? "What!! No Chicken??" How 'bout some cheese, please? Crackers, perhaps? No? Well . . . Doritos, then—OK? Uh . . . how 'bout some stale french bread? . . . or . . . some Cheerios!

In my house, the food that most consistently hits the kitchen floor is Cheerios. I have a Cheerios way of looking at life. Cheerios are here. They fall. I can eat them either in a dish or on the floor. Cheerios are good. Life is good.

When I want chicken but there isn't any, I can either go on a hunger strike or love and eat Cheerios. For me, loving and eating Cheerios is an easier way of being in the world than fussing and fretting about something I'm not getting. Though some may call this settling, I experience this as expanding my personal field of dreams. With a bigger field, I have more chance of feeling satisfaction. The more satisfied I feel, the less longing I experience. Not only do I get to feel happier more often, but the feeling of satisfaction is always working to bring me and chicken closer together. I refer to this as "Angela's Reversal of Fortune." When you can't always get what you want, perhaps it is time to open the way for more.

The first time I tried Cheerios when I wanted chicken, I was pleasantly

surprised. I took the Cheerios challenge. I never would have discovered this tasty treat if I had remained small-hearted and uppity about chicken.

Despite all I've said, I do believe it is important and appropriate at times to express our impatience and frustration. There is much to be said for the well-placed howl and the delicately displayed temper tantrum. There are moments when I would just simply rather howl at the front

Notice and cherish everything you want that you already have.

door or in the basement than peacefully sniff through my own field of dreams. Although howling does not bring chicken, it does feel good to get my howlies off my chest, and I do sleep better afterwards.

There are times when I am out walking with Barbara when I get the urge to return home "right now." Sometimes Barbara fails to notice this and continues merrily on her way. When I want "home now" but fail to get it, I sit down in the middle of the sidewalk and become a one-hundred-pound immovable obstruction. This is a remarkable feat since I do not weigh more than ten pounds dripping wet. When I display a delicate temper tantrum, I get home quickly and by the most direct route.

By way of review, I leave you with seven thoughts to ponder and perhaps use whenever you can't get what you want. Most of these are designed to keep satisfaction high and frustration at a minimum. I hope they work for you as well as they have for me.

(1) Try not to get bogged down by the waiting part of wanting, but keep moving merrily along to the next thing.
(2) Place yourself in a position where you are able to receive what you want.
(3) Proceed with hope.
(4) Expand your field of dreams.
(5) Be easily pleased.
(6) Howl when necessary.
(7) Notice and cherish everything you want that you already have.

Faithfully,
Angela

A Rabbi's Prayer

KETURA ESHEL

Orthodox Judaism labels earth-centered teachings—like astrology—as pagan. Yet over time, Judaism has adopted some "gentile ways." I am thinking particularly of the "directions" sometimes called "winds" in Hebrew. Through my contact with Native American medicine, I have gradually incorporated them into my rituals.

The directions are part of the medicine wheel, an essential element of Native American ritual. The attributes of each direction—name, color, animal, mineral, plant, season—differ from tribe to tribe. Native Americans are as culturally diverse as Europeans; one ought not to confuse a Yugoslav with an Estonian anymore than one can a Sioux with a Hopi.

We find the six directions in the Hebrew writings. An early expression is in Ezekiel's vision of the Throne of God; a man in the front, a lion on the right, an ox on the left and an eagle at the back. In one of the rabbinical commentaries on the Old Testament, *Midrash TDSHA B*, there is an intriguing reference to "seven" winds, above, below, ahead, behind, right and left.

In Jewish practice, we have the ceremony of "shaking the *lulav*," a crucial part of the liturgy for *Sukot*, the Jewish harvest festival. The celebrant invokes North, South, East, West, above and below by shaking a bundle of date palm fronds, myrtle branches, willow branches and citron in all directions. There is a bedtime prayer which invokes the protection of the four archangels: Michael on the right, Gabriel on the left, Uriel in front, Rafael in back.

Finally, there is *Kaddish*, a prayer which glorifies God and beseeches peace; mourners recite the *Kaddish* three times a day. This prayer uses body language to demonstrate four directions. To conclude the prayer, one steps backward three steps (south), bows to the right (east), bows to the left (west) and steps forward three steps (north).

We are privileged to live in a new era, a time when spiritual traditions can inspire each other to strive for perfection. The prayer on page 42, a remembrance of our spiritual aspiration, can lead us to the sacred earth energies.

A poet and artist, Rabbi Ketura Eshel lives in New Mexico.

Janet Gnall

I face East, home of *Hesed* (benevolence). Here I open to new beginnings, here I rejuvenate.

Ahavah (love), I surrender my anger in order to receive your teaching of generosity. Please inspire me to refine my emotions.

I face South, home of *Malkhut* (dominion). Here I experience sensual life joyously, here I mature.

Shiflut (lowliness), I surrender my arrogance in order to receive your teaching of humility. Please help me to remember my Self.

I face West, home of *Gevurah* (might). Here I experience the Mysteries, here I dream.

Yir'ah (awe), I surrender my fear in order to receive your teaching of reverence. Please guide me through the valley of the shadow of death.

I face North, home of *Keter* (crown). Here I pray to the One of Many Names.

Emunah (faith), I surrender my doubt in order to receive your teaching of trust. Please grant me a taste of your bliss.

I reach for the sky, home of *Shamayin* (heavens).

Sky Father, please protect me.

I touch the ground, home of *Aretz* (earth).

Earth Mother, please nourish me.

I return to the center, home of *Tiferet* (beauty). Here I experience majesty and harmony, here I live.

Rahamin (compassion), I surrender my resistance in order to receive your teaching of compassion. Please heal me.

PATTI PHILO

An Apology to the Young Man on the Stairs

Slowly and carefully we went, my arm steadying their age-weakened
    gait
Fearful they would fall on the icy dark steps
Step by step we went
    and then
He was beside me
    "Need a doll?" I heard the young man say— "Need a doll?"
"NO!" I replied firmly and angrily,—"NO!"
No time to be bothered by a black marketeer, "NO!"
"Need a doll?" I heard him say as he touched my arm from behind
    "Need a doll?"
Fearful he would disturb our slow careful progress against the icy dark
    night,
Fearful they would slip and fall,
"NO!" I replied angrily, and
He disappeared up the stairs, into the night.
It was only then, I heard
What he had really said—
The Russian filtering slowly in my tired mind—
    "Need some help?"
    "Need some help?"

A doctoral candidate in Pastoral Care, Patti Philo is the rabbinic consultant for Sonoma County Synagogue Center in Rohnert Park, CA. Her deep interest lies in "applied Judaism" (how one lives life as a Jew).

STATES OF GRACE

by Charlene Spretnak, Harper, San Francisco, 1991, 337 pages, hardback, $21.95.

This insightful new book is a "must" for anyone looking for spiritual guidance and grounding in a world characterized by violence, poverty, and widespread feelings of isolation and helplessness. Boundless material and technological "progress," we were assured, would produce ever increasing well-being for all. Instead, lonely and afraid, we face the prospect of relentless social, economic and environmental deterioration.

Where can we turn to reconnect with our original goodness, harmony, and wholeness? Spretnak takes a fresh look at the wisdom teachings of Buddhism, Native American spirituality, Goddess spirituality, and the Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) and finds in them the spirituality we need to restore "peace, justice, and the integrity of creation" to our turbulent and immensely destructive world. This is an immensely encouraging and helpful book. *PW*

A SECRET WORLD: SEXUALITY AND THE SEARCH FOR CELIBACY

by A. W. Richard Sipe, Brunner/Mazel Publishers, New York, 324 pages, hardback, $15.00.

This is a classic study of a pressing problem in the Roman Catholic Church today, the painful issue of celibacy. Richard Sipe, a priest now retired from the active ministry and married, interviewed 1500 priests and their confidants over the course of 25 years in an attempt to learn the truth about the sexuality of supposedly celibate men. The result is a persuasive story of courageous striving and sometimes disastrous failure. Sipe attributes much of the failure to the outmoded anthropology on which the celibacy vow was shaped in the Middle Ages.

A landmark contribution with widespread implications for public discussions of sexual and marital ethics, this book also has much to say about religious attitudes toward women. If the celibacy vow is motivated in part by male fear of women, this same fear may explain much of the resistance religion has to the emergence of women as equal partners with men. *MFG*

GOD MAKES THE RIVERS TO FLOW

by Eknath Easwaren, Nilgiri Press, Tomales/California, 1991, 224 pages, paperback, $12.95.

Eknath Easwaren, one of the most respected teachers of meditation in the world today, has put together a superb collection of short inspirational selections from the world's sacred literature—Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, Native American.

Powerful, positive, practical, universal in appeal and of great literary beauty, the pieces in the collection remind us that life has a purpose in which each person has a meaningful part; that all creation is one and full of divinity; that every moment is precious; and what gives life meaning is love and human relationships. A brief eight-point program of meditation and spiritual growth is included, helping to make this book a most valuable instrument for transforming one's life. *PW*

EROS TOWARD THE WORLD: PAUL TILLICH AND THE THEOLOGY OF THE EROTIC

by Alexander C. Irwin, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1991, 204 pages, paperback, $12.95.

Christianity has traditionally affirmed that "eros," human love, should be overcome by the superhuman power of "agape," sacrificial love. But for more and more religious thinkers—like Paul Tillich, the great 20th century theologian—eros is integral to the spiritual life, not an obstacle. The "energy of connection-making," eros puts an end to alienation and makes people come alive with passionate communal feeling and joyful creativity. Not to be confused with romantic longing, eros is a divine-human power that motivates moral action and love for God. Real love is a unity of eros and agape, but the driving force of eros must be experienced for intense involvement in life and true fulfillment. *MFG*

We welcome your comments. Please send them to The Editor, Fellowship in Prayer, 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542.

It is with great joy that I received and read the last issue of *Fellowship in Prayer*. Thank you for such a fine publication.

I am deeply grateful for your Interfaith Network. My name appeared in your listing some months ago, and I have received some wonderful letters.

Some of us in the Network conceived the idea of a "Names of God Prayer and Meditation Group." We had remarked in our letters that there are many names for the One Divine Source: Ram, Christ, Higher Power, Lord, and so on. We decided to dedicate one day a month to remembering God according to these different names. Each member of the group spends an hour during that day in deep prayer, quietly and silently repeating in one's heart a name for God from one's own religious tradition.

We would like to invite your readers to join us so that people all over the country—and the world—will be contemplating God in this way. We would like to fill a block of 12 hours, say, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (or whatever time is convenient), once a month. People who wish to sign up for an hour may contact me at 19-5 Valley View Apts., Watervliet, NY 12189.

Jane J. Davis; Watervliet, NY

For me, the best feature of *FiP* is your conviction that the basic bedrock beliefs of all the great religions point to the same Reality. Your publication has given me permission to believe what I truly believe: all religions and spiritualities are a way to the Truth. I am joining your Interfaith Network in the hope that I can connect spiritually with others in my area.

Jeanette Clancy; Avon, MN

A dear friend, Betty Panenko, shares her copies of *Fellowship in Prayer* with me. In the August, 1991, issue, you printed a beautiful Native American prayer, "O Great Spirit."

When I taught a painting course at the Episcopal Cenference Center in Ivoryton, CT, I gave the prayer to the nature instructor. She read it to the students, then gave it to the minister. He thought it so appropriate

that he held an evening candlelight service, using it with other Native American readings. Many attended and commented on the true inspiration of it. During the summer, they plan to repeat the service out of doors at an authentic wigwam on the property.

Thank you for your unique, excellent publication.

Jill Disque; W. Redding, CT

It is with heartfelt appreciation that I renew my subscription to *Fellowship in Prayer*. Each issue brings deeper insight, wonder, joy, revelation, and a growing realization that, though each one of us is different—unique—yet we are all part of one breath, one life: God. It is truly spiritual feasting to read of (and recognize at times), the journeys of others to oneness with God—and thus Oneness with each other. Your publication nourishes the soul. Thank you!

Sheliah Moran; Shutesbury, MA

I am a Catholic Christian living in Nigeria. I wish to become a member of your Interfaith Network. May I also appeal to all the members for prayers for myself and my family. We need prayer for greater faith in God, for educational attainment, prosperity in the face of the hard times we are enduring in Nigeria, as well as for more service to God and humanity. I look forward to hearing from people in your Interfaith Network.

Effrong Offrong; Calabar, Nigeria

I received a gift subscription to *FiP*. The excellent last issue prompts me to become a "Spiritual Friend." Keep up the vital work you are doing, especially on the save-the-earth issue. God bless you!

Rev. Fred Gaston; Steubenville, OH

I am serving a life sentence at the SCI for women at Muncy, PA. A Quaker friend just gave me a gift subscription to *FIP*. During my 66 years on earth, I have read a great number of religious publications in my quest for spiritual enlightenment and growth. But never before have I enjoyed reading—from cover to cover—a publication that produced such an inspirational stimulus to thought and spirit. What a beautiful evening I had as I read *Fellowship in Prayer*! There was something I could identify with in each article, perhaps proving our unconscious bonding with the universe and all that is in it.

Lois June F.; Muncy, PA

Janet Gnall

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